

ISSUE #87: STAIRWAY, AUDIOVISION, WAR OF AGES, DEMON HUNTER, AS I LAY DYING

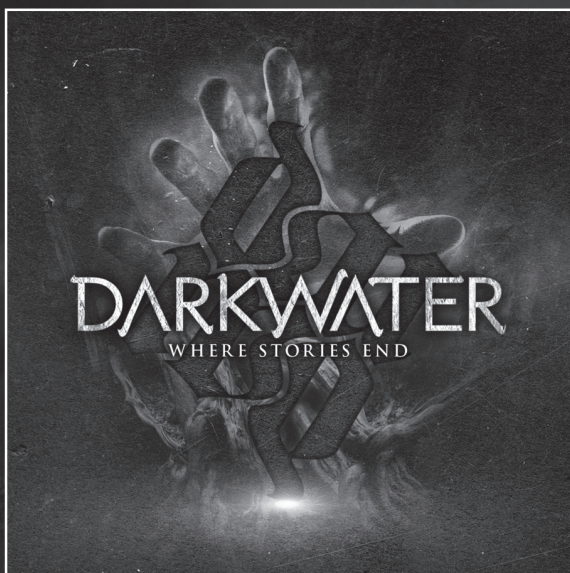
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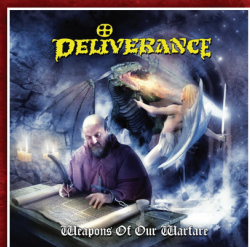
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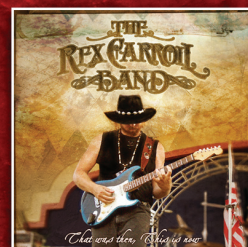
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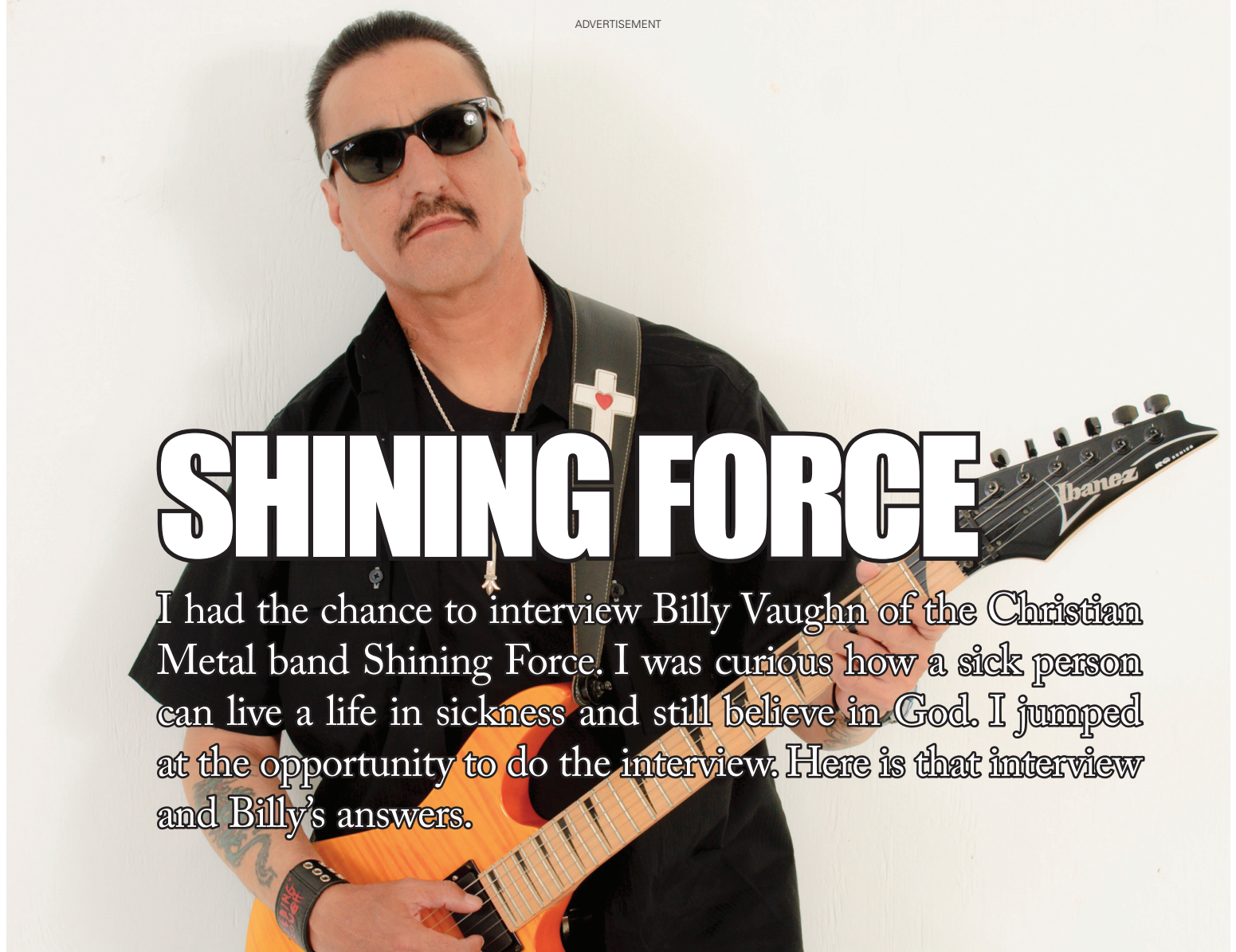
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SHINING FORCE

I had the chance to interview Billy Vaughn of the Christian Metal band Shining Force. I was curious how a sick person can live a life in sickness and still believe in God. I jumped at the opportunity to do the interview. Here is that interview and Billy's answers.

Billy is it true that you have an incurable liver disease?

Yes, John I do.

What exactly do you have?

I have Chronic Hepatitis C and last stages of cirrhosis of the liver.

Wow!! How bad is it?

Bad enough that I need a liver transplant. I am on the list now. And when my numbers reach above 20 I will need a transplant. My meld number is at 16 now.

How can you live with a sickness and still believe in God?

I have always believed in God at a very young age. But it wasn't till 1989 when I established a relationship with God, and saw with my own eye's his love for us all through Jesus Christ.

How can a sick person as yourself live with a smile on your face and still keep your faith?

Well John, we Christians believe that there is something beyond this life that is better. We will see God one day and we must trust him with everything, even our own lives.

That is a very strong Statement.

We serve a very strong and might God. He is able to do more than we can imagine.

Now tell me more about this solo cd you will be doing with different artists.

I wanted to do something different with musicians and vocalists that I have always looked up to. This was my chance, so I asked as God says and I am now receiving.

What about your band Shining Force?

We are still completing our newest cd "By the Blood" soon to be released. The solo project will not take away my passion for my own band. I am blessed to be able to do such a solo cd.

Who is on the solo cd Billy?

I am excited to say Jimmy Brown of Deliverance, George Ochoa of Recon and Deliverance, Rex Carroll of Whitecross, Sean Peck of Cage, Robert Gutierrez of Ultimatum and Rey Parra of Sacred Warrior. Rey and I will be doing a very awesome song that I have always wanted to do. Let's just say it is a Sacred Warrior song. I am still looking for more artists to help out. This cd is going to be made to help with finances at home when I can no longer work. I will be donating \$1 to the liver disease foundation to help find a cure for this disease from every cd sold.

Who will be recording the cd?

Michael Heald. He will engineer and produce the cd. Mike is a great person and an awesome guitarist and producer.

I was honored to interview such a person as Billy Vaughn. His compassion and love for his fellow man has astonished me and has given me hope for the human race. If you're interested in this project contact Billy at billyvaughn0423@att.net He still needs artist to help out.

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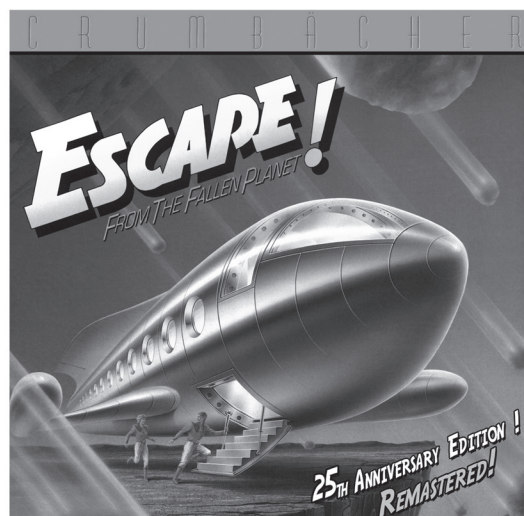
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METAL TRACKS

Hard-news-for-metal-heads



By Jeff McCormack

As I Lay Dying | Demon Hunter | Blessthefall | War of Ages | Mercy Screams

The National | Richmond, VA | May 6th, 2010

Two friends and I made the 90-minute trek to the show, getting there early and spending some time out back talking to some of the guys from the bands before show time. The night opened with a local VA band, Mercy Screams, who started the night hot and heavy, receiving a decent response from the unfamiliar crowd.

Next up was War of Ages, who blasted perfectly through a shorter than desired five-song set of new and old tracks. Opening with "Through the Flames" they set the stage on fire and kept it burning until ending with "All Consuming Fire," which had the expected result of setting the whole place further ablaze with headbanging breakdown frenzy.

Next up was the seemingly out-of-place Blessthefall, who although a bit anemic musically in comparison to the metal bands they were touring with, they still rocked it hard, even with singer Beau on crutches from a stupid stunt the evening before. While they did put on a great show, this was still the weakest point of the night in my estimate, kind of palling in comparison to the rest of the show.

The fire set by the early bands was stoked

and burned hotter as Demon Hunter blasted through an amazing ten-song set. Opening with the scorching "The World is a Thorn" and tossing in favorites like "Fading Away," "Tie This Around Your Neck," "Not I" and "Storm the Gates of Hell," they ended their metal massacre with "Just Breathe." Having only seen them live on video before, and in what usually seemed like a headlining status, they seemed out of place in a stripped-down opening type context; but they made up for it in power, passion and precision.

Finally, it was time for As I Lay Dying. Being only a recent convert to this band's music, I was not sure how hyped I should have been to be there. But there I stood – by this time abandoned in the floor crowd by my two friends – alone, yet surrounded by masses – standing at stage front, pressed up against the metal railing, already extremely sweaty and somewhat exhausted from the metal onslaught of the previous bands – I waited and wondered. As the lights went down, I could feel the energy welling up in the audience – and then the wait was over. Like getting hit by a truck, the band blasted on stage and took command like a master. Everything seemed perfect – the lights set a powerful mood, the band seemed flawless and crowd went wilder than ever. Fourteen tunes and a drum solo later, it was over – and I left there more of a major fan than when I had entered.

News bullets

As They Sleep, a new band signed to Solid State Records, is billed as "technical death metal." We like the sound of that. Their debut album, *Dynasty*, released in late November. The band is touring with **Living Sacrifice** (and **Becoming the Archetype** and **To Speak of Wolves**) on the aptly-billed, *Solid State Records: A Very Metal Christmas Tour*.

Stairway has released a new digi-single, "Christmas Merry Christmas." It's available everywhere on iTunes.

Retroactive Records (and Bombworks and Born Twice) are now getting their releases distributed in Family Christian stores across the USA.

Bill Bafford, the man behind Rxxx Productions, also facilitates the Strictly Stryper Podcast, which comes out each month with Stryper-related interviews and music.

Todd Moyer is putting together a special project with his band **Fair Warning**. It'll be called *Master's Musician's Tour* and feature a bunch of guest vocalists. In a stroke of really bad judgment, they even asked *Heaven's Metal Fanzine* editor Doug Van Pelt to guest on this thing.

August Burns Red has released a crazy version of "Little Drummer Boy."

Sweden's **Golden Resurrection** has already sold-out of its first print run of *Glory to My King*, their debut album on Liljegen Records.

Hardcore Circus, also on Liljegen, is releasing its debut album, *Wake Up Call*, on December 3rd.

Chained is another new Swedish export, which reportedly sounds like "Motorhead and Black Label Society."

Intense Millennium Records is re-releasing albums by **Ransom** (self-titled debut) and **Undercover** (*Branded*) in January. **Sacred Warrior's** *Master's Command* and **Bloodgood's** *Rock in a Hard Place* will be released later in 2011 (as opposed to earlier announcements).

Fyleaf is releasing *Memento Vivere*, which means "Remember to Live" on December 7th.

Prior to taking the stage at Rev Gen 2009, **Skillet** frontman **John Cooper** was singing "Master of the Metal" to me, smiling as I finished the verse for him. While not as metallic as their '80s influences, Cooper is quite the metal fan. Skillet's latest album, *Awake*, went Gold in less than a year. Their live show is pretty explosive, using all the accoutrements of an arena hard rock band.

Times of Grace is a new project from **Jesse Leach** (original KsE vocalist) and **Adam D.** It's extremely heavy and produced flawlessly (of course).

Underoath's *Ø (DISAMBIGUATION)* shows the band moving in a decidedly heavier direction.





BRITAIN HAS A SPECIAL PLACE IN THE WORLD OF HEAVY METAL. MANY OF THE FIRST WAVE OF ROCK BANDS TO BEAR THE NAME HEAVY METAL – LIKE DEEP PURPLE, LED ZEPPELIN AND BLACK SABBATH – HAILED FROM ENGLAND, AS DID THE NEXT ERA KNOWN AS THE NEW WAVE OF BRITISH HEAVY METAL, WHICH INCLUDED MANY BANDS THAT ARE STILL TOURING TODAY – LIKE IRON MAIDEN, JUDAS PRIEST, SAXON. THIS ERA REFINED THE BURGEONING METAL SOUND IN THE LATE 70'S, EARLY 80'S AND CREATED THE SOUND REFERRED TO TODAY AS CLASSIC METAL OR TRADITIONAL METAL. UNLIKE MANY OF THE OTHER BRANCHES OF METAL WHICH GROW AND EVOLVE CONSTANTLY, CLASSIC METAL HAS REMAINED LARGELY THE SAME OVER THE LAST 30 YEARS. EVEN ITS OFFSHOOT, POWER METAL, STAYS TRUE TO FORM. STAIRWAY IS A CHRISTIAN BAND CARRYING ON A RICH HERITAGE OF BRITISH CLASSIC METAL. THEY'VE BEEN TOGETHER ALMOST 20 YEARS AND HAVE JUST RELEASED THEIR 5TH ALBUM, WHICH WE WILL TALK ABOUT WITH STAIRWAY'S SINGER, GRAEME LESLIE.

Chris Gatto: Hello Graeme, you guys have a new album, *Interregnum*, out now. My first question is about the album title. From my recollection of Latin taken decades ago, I believe the meaning would be "between the kingdoms (or reigns)." Does that refer to us being between the 1st and 2nd returns of Christ or is there another meaning entirely?

Graeme Leslie: Hello, Chris. Yeah, you've got it more or less exactly right, depending on your interpretation of what "between the reigns" means. It is a reference to the times we are in now and when Christ returns.

The artwork this time is incredible. Is the artist this time the same one for your legendary debut *No Rest, No Mercy*?

Yes, it had been rather a long time since Rodney Matthews did the cover artwork for the *No Rest* CD and when we were recording *Interregnum*, it seemed to have the same feel and vibe as the *No Rest* album, so we thought it might be great if Rodney could supply the front cover artwork. You'll no doubt agree, it's a corker!!

Tell me about the making of the new album. And what is the concept this time around?

It took rather longer to finish than we first planned due to various unforeseeable circumstances! The album runs as a storyboard in some ways, starting from the first track, "The Suffering Servant" – talking about Christ's time in the garden of Gethsemane and His crucifixion – then leading us through "I'm Calling," "Born To Die," "New Life," "What Lies Within" – with the need for salvation through Christ – and then a reminder with "In The Shadow Of The Cross," "Ride The Wind," "Enter The Light," "Fear & Lies" that the devil is always present trying to lead us away; then continuing through to the ultimate "The Battle's Over" (Christ's victory on the cross), and ending with His return and our eternal life in the "Born To Die" epilogue: "Born to die – Yet Saved To Live!" It sort of completes the whole picture begun with the 1st track "The Battle Of Heaven" on the 1st Stairway CD *No Rest, No Mercy*.

There is something refreshing about how Stairway has stayed the path with



a no-frills, classic metal sound that sounds true to your NWOBHM roots, without trying to be ultra-modern, yet does not sound dated. Timeless is a word I might use cautiously. Who are the bands that still inspire you?

Thanks for that! We're still inspired by the bands we grew up listening to: Judas Priest, Maiden, Queen, Motorhead, Thin Lizzy, Gary Moore. Having said that, there are a few "new" bands around as well like Muse, Threshold, Arena who are great and give a slightly different slant on the NWOBHM sound.

Many consider Britain to be the birthplace of heavy metal. What does the heavy metal scene there look like in 2010?

It's sort of bubbling on the underground, not really in the mainstream. It's a shame that metal's birthplace, Birmingham, isn't really celebrated and officially acknowledged in the same way that Liverpool is for the Beatles and the Mersey Sound. There are still a few places in the Midlands, where the greats like Led Zep, David Bowie played before they became superstars, but there's nothing even to suggest that they ever did – pity really! Europe is really big at the moment for hard rock and metal and is where most bands try and to get to. We had the opportunity a couple of years back to play in Germany; the fans are really into their metal and hard rock over there in Europe, much more really, than here in Britain.

How's the reaction been to *Interregnum* thus far?

So far it's been great – only a month in and most reactions have been very positive from both the fans and media. We were a bit unsure how it would be taken, considering the time scale between this and the last album, but thus far, it's been great!

Many Christian metal fans remember Stairway on the *White Metal Warriors* compilation and your 1993 debut *No Rest, No Mercy*, but are unaware that the band quietly put out 3 other albums between the first and the new one. What has the band been up to in the intervening years?

We did a lot of live work playing the UK quite extensively after the release of *No Rest* in '93 which continued for the next few years. We are totally self-financed, as a lot of independent bands are these days, so it's been a steady process getting albums recorded and released, working when we can with media companies, distributors and promo companies and lately playing festivals with the likes of Narnia, Rob Rock, Blaze Bayley, Blitzkrieg and many others. It can be a bit of a hard slog sometimes, but we still really enjoy it, even after all this time, so we'll carry on until we drop!!

Do you have any plans to tour w/ the new album – or perhaps I should clarify – tour beyond the UK?

Yeah, we'd love to tour the new album; we'd love to go back to Europe at some point, and it'd be great to get over to the US before long, maybe to one or more

of the festivals. We are probably too late this year for anything definite, so maybe look at doing something next year. Really, I guess, it's all dependent on costs, both for us as a band and for promoters putting the gigs on; but with early signs that the new album is doing well, we may look more closely into touring.

Where can fans buy your CDs worldwide?

Best place for the new *Interregnum* CD I guess is from CD Baby [cdbaby.com/artist/stairway]. The Limited Edition Coloured Vinyl version of *Interregnum* is available from [stairwayonline.co.uk] as are the other four Stairway CDs, T-Shirts and merchandise.

Any special messages for the *Heaven's Metal* readers?

Keep your faith strong! *Interregnum* talks about salvation through Christ; there are many distractions the devil puts in front of us, so we need to stand firm and when we fail, ask for forgiveness; there is only one way, and Christ in His abundant love allows us to make that choice.

Cheers, Graeme, and best wishes for the new album. It was great talking to you!

Thanks a lot, Chris. Great to talk with you. All the best and God Bless!

[Photos from left: Graeme, Andy, Pete]





REX CARROLL BAND

The Many Faces of Rex

BY JEFF MCCORMACK

TO ANYONE WHO HAS BEEN AROUND THE CHRISTIAN MUSIC SCENE FOR THE PAST 25+ YEARS LIKE I HAVE, THE NAME REX CARROLL IS A COMMON HOUSEHOLD NAME MOSTLY DUE TO HIS WORK WITH WHITECROSS IN THE LATE 80'S/EARLY 90'S. AFTER THAT HE TEAMED UP WITH JIMI BENNETT (OF SACRED FIRE FAME), AS WELL AS ROBERT SWEET AND TIM GAINES OF STRYPER, TO RECORD UNDER THE MONIKER KING JAMES, RELEASING TWO ALBUMS BEFORE DROPPING OFF THE RADAR IN THE 90'S (THE SECOND OF WHICH, TITLED *THE FALL*, WAS JUST RECENTLY REMASTERED AND REISSUED). HIS LATEST RELEASE, *THE REX CARROLL BAND*, SHOWS HIS BLUES TEXAS-GUITAR SIDE, SHOWING JUST HOW DIVERSE THIS AMAZING AXE-MAN IS. I RECENTLY HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF CATCHING UP WITH REX TO DISCUSS THIS NEW RELEASE AND SEE WHAT ELSE IS UP HIS SLEEVE. TURNS OUT HIS SLEEVES ARE STUFFED TO THE MAX, SO THE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT FOR ONE OF CHRISTIAN MUSIC'S PREMIER GUITARISTS.

JM: So Rex, I understand you are just back in town from a short trip overseas, fill us in on that trip.

RC: We had a short trip over in Germany and Holland. We had two shows with Whitecross, and I also got to play a set as the Rex Carroll Band. We were at the Legends of Rock festival and we also had a club date we played.

Very cool, I was going to ask what the current status of Whitecross was these days, if there was any at all. Is it mainly just appearances at fests and the like, or is there a possibility of a future recording?

Well, we played this recent event and we've played Guatemala and we're currently in negotiations to play in November down in Brazil, as well as talking about playing next March in Switzerland. There are a lot of festivals in the US (that) would like to have it also. It gets more difficult bringing everyone together because of airfares and such and just trying to get everyone to line up their schedules can be like trying to get an aircraft carrier turned around in the ocean. (laughs)

The Rex Carroll Band is something that is local, so I am able to play out as a three-piece band, which is the core, or I can add a keyboardist and background singers depending on the distance and if the budget allows. With our record being so new and selling well, there have been a lot of inquiries and interest for opportunities in the future to play dates and festivals. So it is all good.

Whitecross is still alive and kicking, and people keep asking for a new album, which I will try to get them, but it is difficult as I said. It would be easier if we could get some help from a label, otherwise I have my studio here in Chicago where I can record my own records. The guys are spread out in different states.

So a new Whitecross release is possible?

Yes, the option is there for a future new album. I just released my new album, and I have my new metal band The Heal, which we'll hopefully be talking about in a few months when that record comes out,

so it is just a timing thing for Whitecross.

So, what kind of metal would you say the new style fits into?

I would actually better describe it as modern hard rock, with borderline metal. It is not like an old school metal like Metallica, it has more of a modern edge. It is a melodic hard rock, but when you hear it you say it definitely has modern edge to it.

The recent reissue of the second King James release showed us a more alternative rock/metal feel, would it be like that?

It does not sound like King James at all. Because of that re-release though, it has kind of opened a door of opportunity. King James is dormant, because there is so much other stuff to do, but one of these days we'll get around to doing it again. Due to the re-release, Jimi and I have been developing some new ideas, and I think if we do a new album, it would be closer to the first album's commercial metal feel more than



ND

the second album, but would not be an 80's thing. We would make music that fits Jimi's high voice.

So, when you write songs, what key element makes the "sound" belong to, say, King James, verses a song that would be for The Heal, or even Whitecross? How do you approach writing, or what determines writing for different styles?

That is a good question. I made an effort two to three years ago to stop listening to the radio. I spent a lifetime listening and absorbing sounds in playing guitar and I have reached a point where I just reach into myself and pull it out. If I am not listening to the radio and allow myself to not just be influenced by what is current, it is hopefully an intentional decision that I want to just create my own sound. It is going to be the sum total of everything I have listened to growing up, but synthesized through my own life experience. So I am just trying to do anything that I like – that appeals to me on any given day. Frankly I am bored with the radio.

Music that gets me excited would be any kind of foreign language music, for example I like Italian pop music, Spanish music, Tex-Mex music and all kinds of different sounds. So when I sit to write, I do not sit and say I am writing a song for this band, or that band. Whatever comes out this week, you work with it and the song will tell you which category it fits into.

I also love Celtic music, and lately have been working on a series of instrumental pieces with acoustic guitar and synth keyboards, just casually putting that together. I have no idea what I will do with it, but it's good stuff, so I figure I'll just work on it, and eventually someday it might get released. I don't want to be a one sound, one style, one-dimensional player.

This being the day of remastered reissues, has there been any talk of reissuing the Whitecross back-catalog?

They are all owned by EMI, and they won't ever let it go. They own everything and have no desire to share

with anyone. God forbid if the artist makes any money, as long as the label does. They won't release them and they make it prohibitively expensive for anyone to even license it from them. They would rather see it sit and no one do anything with it. Many record labels are just like that.

Anything else you'd like to add?

Yes, just so people know what is coming, I am currently out playing live supporting the Rex Carroll Band CD, and am thinking about strong possibilities for the next record. The Heal release is coming soon and for now should be released through Retroactive Records. And Whitecross is still playing shows too, so we're out there, too.

HEAVENS
GATE



Focusing in with... **AUDIOVISION**

BY JONATHAN SWANK

THINK JESUS METAL IS DEAD? THINK AGAIN. WITH THE RELATIVE LACK OF MISSIONARY-MINDED BANDS WITHIN THE CURRENT CHRISTIAN METAL SCENE, IT'S TEMPTING TO DEDUCE THAT GOD NO LONGER WORKS THROUGH METAL EVANGELISM. NOT SO. AS WE CELEBRATE THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR OF *HEAVEN'S METAL*, DON'T FAIL TO RECOGNIZE THAT THE SCENE'S ORIGINS LIE WITHIN THE REALM OF CHRIST-CENTRIC MINISTRY THROUGH ROCK AND METAL. SWEDISH ROCKER CHRISTIAN LILJEGREN – RECENTLY DEPARTED FROM NARNIA – HAS SET OUT, WITH THE HELP OF HIS TALENTED NEW BANDMATES, TO ENCOURAGE BELIEVERS AROUND THE WORLD AND TO REACH OUT TO THOSE IN NEED OF SALVATION VIA THE BAND'S BRAND OF BLISTERING MELODIC METAL. LISTEN IN AS CHRISTIAN DISCUSSES THE NEW ALBUM, *FOCUS*, HIS REASONS FOR LEAVING NARNIA AND HIS AMBITIONS AS A METAL EVANGELIST.

"I wanted another label to release the album, so I can focus more to be a rock evangelist."

JS: Hi, Christian. It's been awhile since we've had an update from you in the pages of *Heaven's Metal*. Can you tell us a bit about what you've been up to for the past few years and how this new version of Audiovision came into being?

CL: I really needed a big break from touring and recording to get the passion back to make music when I left Narnia in early 2008. When my rest was over I wanted to form a fresh new touring and recording band with the influences from 70's and 80's hard rock and metal. To use the Audiovision name felt natural as I wanted to perform songs from *The Calling* live and I loved the name. I wanted to co-operate with my brother Simeon Liljegren on bass and vocals again, who is a great songwriter; his bass playing is great and he also has fantastic power and charisma on stage. We played together in several bands (Seven Seas, Borderline, Modest Attraction) between 1986-1996 where we recorded several albums and toured a lot. Two other musicians were Thomas and Torbjörn Weinesjö (Veni Domine). I know they are dedicated to the music and the vision I wanted with Audiovision, so it felt great to include them. Torbjörn (guitars) is a good songwriter, especially in the heavier direction and more epic elements. The final member to introduce is my close friend Olov Andersson on keyboards from the symphonic and progressive rock band Grand Stand, who can create symphonic and beautiful rock music.

Can you describe the new album, *Focus*? How does it differ from the first Audiovision release?

In 2003, when the vision of Audiovision took shape, I was involved in Narnia and I had songs that didn't fit into the Narnia concept, but I wanted to do something with these song ideas. I presented my idea for my friend, guitarist and producer Lars Chriss (Lion's Share, Road To Ruin) and he had songs he presented for me that I liked a lot and he offered to produce the album. Lars also had good contacts with musicians that I like and respect. The rest is history and the album features many of my musical heroes, among them Jeff Scott Soto (Malmsteen and Talisman), Bruce Kulick (Kiss), Tony Franklin (Whitesnake and Blue Murder), Mic Michaeli (Europe) and more. In total, over 20 different musicians are involved and play on the album. Of course, you can hear their trademarks on the album blending with my songwriting, so it was a cool mix and a major album in my musical career. I am very proud of *The Calling* and to have all these great musicians involved. It was a solo album with the different songs and different players, not a band, and that is the biggest difference compared to Audiovision 2010.

Olov Andersson and I had been talking for years to form a band in the style of Rainbow, Whitesnake and Dio all in

all to include the best elements we know from the 70's and 80's in the fresh production of 2010.

So, whereas *The Calling* was more of a collaborative, solo release, this current lineup of musicians is now a band? Is that correct? And if so, does Audiovision plan to tour behind this new release?

Yes, that is correct! Now we are here ready to rock for Christ with *Focus* and two videos are filmed and released – "Invitation" and "Keep The Fire Burning" – to promote the new album. I am so happy for this band and the joy we have together. All of the songs on *Focus* are composed and written by all members in the band. We did our world premiere at Legends of Rock together with Bloodgood April 4, 2009. Since then we have played shows in Sweden, Norway and Germany and we did a small successful mini-tour with Stryper in Sweden and Germany in January 2010 where we tried the new songs for the first time and the response was great. It is wonderful to be back again on the road! Our goal is to go the way God has planned for this band and it is a big adventure what will happen during the *Keep The Fire Burning Tour* 2010/2011. And, we already have many great songs for the next album.

Tell me a bit about the songwriting process for *Focus*. How long have you guys been working on this release? And what do you hope to accomplish with this release?

11 months. We wrote everything in our rehearsal place and we presented ideas and worked out all arrangements together. Then, for the first time we, took in a professional producer (Erik Mårtensson) who is tremendous vocalist and guitar player and has his own band Eclipse and W.E.T together with Jeff Scott Soto. He also works with guys from Giant, Toto and Survivor and many more artists in melodic hard rock and metal. He has also worked with me with the 2nd and 3rd Divinefire albums.

What exactly happened to Rivel Records, and why the name change? Why did you decide to release this on Ulterium instead of your own record label?

The name change of the label was because I took my family name LILJEGREN back again in late 2007, so today the label is called Liljegren Records [liljegren-records.com]. I have known Emil Westerdahl, the owner of Ulterium Records, for some years and I have helped him with distribution and connections in Japan for his bands. I know his heart and his fire to do a great work and I wanted another label to release the album so I can focus more to be a rock evangelist. It is always hard to be sitting on two chairs, so it felt natural to go this direction.

Emil was the right choice and we are a strong team

together with him, our churches and prayer groups to make the ministry of Audiovision as powerful as possible. I presented Emil for the other members and very quickly it felt natural to work with him as we have a very good communication. Please pray and support Emil and Ulterium Records' releases. He is a man of God who wants to spread the good news through his label.

Christian, many of the long time Narnia fans – as well as those of us at *Heaven's Metal* – were surprised when you announced your departure from Narnia. Why did you decide to move on from Narnia?

First, I want to say I am very proud of my work with Narnia. The vision I had from the start in 1996 was to do neoclassical hard rock / metal with a straightforward Christian message. I was both tired in 2007 and I needed a break for personal reasons and we wanted to do different things. They wanted to go forward and make the new album, but I was not there and decided to leave the band as I am a man who always puts 100% into something. I can't go half-hearted, so I left in early 2008. I personally wanted to go back to the sound and style we had on *Awakening* and *Long Live The King*, but the others wanted to change the style. My passion for neoclassical hard rock / metal is still huge, since the day I heard Yngwie Malmsteen for the first time in 1985. I really miss it, so when I signed the band Reinxeed to my label I met Tommy Johansson – a new guitar hero and a great vocalist and songwriter – who had the same passion for this style as me.

We have now formed a new band called Golden Resurrection and we have written songs for a debut album that follows the musical tradition of Malmsteen, Rainbow, Impellitteri and Europe and the songs I did on the first two Narnia albums. We have recorded the debut album this spring and we are in the mixing process right now, so Narnia fans that have been waiting for new albums in the same style as *Awakening* and *Long Live The King* will be very happy to hear Golden Resurrection. Erik Mårtensson – who produced *Focus* – will produce Golden Resurrection as well. The album will see the light in the end of this year if everything goes as planned.

Finally, if there is anything else you'd like to share with our readers, please feel free to do so.

Thanks for all your incredible support and prayers during the years. I am very excited for the future. To follow Christ is the biggest adventure of them all. Lots of blessings to all of you!

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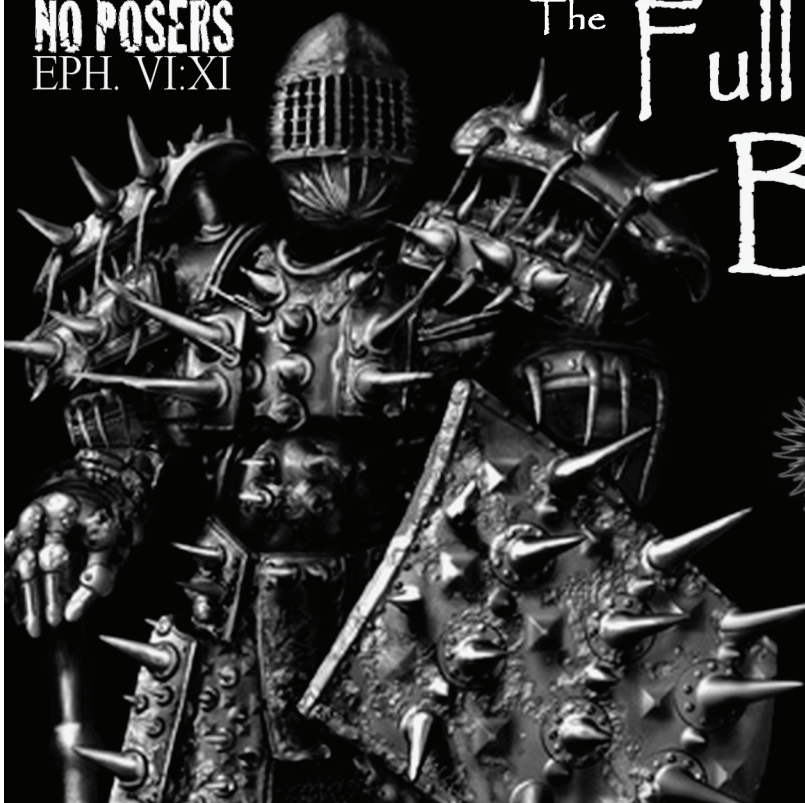


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MASS - Fighter

Produced by Tom Allom (Judas Priest) this 1982 unreleased album finally on CD! For fans of Quiet Riot, Stryper, and Motley Crue!

MASS - '84 Unchained

This is a new release featuring the entire 4 song self-titled 1984 EP (remastered and on CD for the first time!) plus the exclusive bonus track "Bones" rounds out this 22 minute classic metal masterpiece!



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MASS SEA OF BLACK

Once labelmates with Barren Cross and Stryper on Enigma, these guys have stayed true to their roots over the years. And they still perform and entertain, which for a band this old is quite an accomplishment. But to craft possibly your best work ever at this point in your career is more than just an accomplishment – it's downright amazing! These 11 (+1 instrumental interlude) upbeat and encouraging songs may not be treading in any new waters for the band, but their brand of rock is both tasteful and timeless. And while some of the topics here are rehashed rock themes ("Coming Home" and "All That I Needed" for example), the band delivers them in a manner that is warm and sincere. Even the tender, acoustic ballad, "More Than a Friend," shows that these guys are confident of where they are musically – this one is straight from the heart. [Escape] Jonathan Swank



LUTHER N DOGMATICS

Have you heard the one about the guitarist that walks into a rave? No punch line – that's just what's going on here. Ex-Junker Jorg frontman almost escapes his nu-metal moniker with his new band Luther N (still focused around the historical figure of Martin Luther) to bring us some toned-down hard rock with worshipful poppy choruses, a techno/ dance beat and insightful evangelical lyrics. Not for the extreme metalhead, yet there are some credible guitar licks once you've gotten past the slow-starting first track. Get out your dancing shoes. [Youngside] Chris Gatto



MISERATION THE MIRROWING SHADOW

Sweden's Christian Alvestam (ex-Scar Symmetry), Jani Stefanovic (Divinefire), and co. shed any melodic element that may have tempered the death metal of their first album. Miseration brings us a new disc on a new label and this time the formula is hard and relentless, bringing excellent death metal that will greatly please Dethklok fans and occasionally strays into deathcore vocal stylings. There is much to like here and the dark sci-fi cover art, conjuring up images of the movie *Pitch Black*, tops off the package nicely. Lyrics are mostly introspective and avoid faith topics. [Lifeforce] Chris Gatto

WORLD TO ASHES IN CONTEMPLATION OF DEATH

From the Sabbath-inspired intro that kicks off opener "Into the Abyss," it's clear that WTA aren't content to rest on their laurels. They've taken the melodic death metal from their debut EP, but added some needed dynamic shifts, tightened up the riffing and also included some thrash elements. Repeated listens, rather than growing old or stale are more fruitful at bringing out the intricate layers of sound playfully hidden under the surface. The band is at their best when the melodies shine brightest. [Whirlwind] Loyd Harp



THE SACRIFICED 2012

Florida's The Sacrificed – now signed to Roxx – has delivered a killer sophomore release for those that love traditional metal. The old band Haven comes to mind – mixed with an early Queensryche vibe – but this is better than any of the Haven output. In fact, Eli Prinsen sings somewhere between Keven Ayers and Geoff Tate, and at times almost sounds like Jimmy Brown. For those that reveled in last year's excellent Future's End release, this will be worth checking out for sure, as these guys do the concept metal exceptionally well. But where Future's End only danced around spiritual issues, these guys blatantly tackle them. "I Concede" is warm and well-crafted ballad, but really, the song writing quality is very high on the entire CD. Intelligent, powerful, insightful and uplifting ... old-school metal never sounded so good in 2010! [Roxx] Jonathan Swank



THE REX CARROLL BAND THAT WAS THEN THIS IS NOW

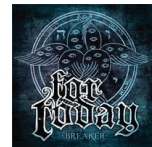
Retroactive's release of The Rex Carroll Band debut is one of the best albums this year. The influence of Billy Gibbons and Stevie Ray Vaughan is loud and proud – the songs full of lush bluesy textures that reach deep into your soul. The production values are top notch with lots of punch and attack – good tones across the board with a masterful sound that just deserves to be played loudly. This is not Whitecross mark two, not at all, and that I will say is a good thing. The Rex Carroll Band has provided a stellar performance which has been introduced to a new generation of fans. Can we all stand up and applaud? I'm standing on my seat. [Retroactive] Keven Crothers



SUPERNAL ENDGAME

TOUCH THE SKY – VOLUME I

For those who love praise and worship type music but tire of the repetitive and sometimes overly simplistic approach to much of that genre's output, Supernal Endgame is an artist you may want to check out – especially if you just happen to be a fan of symphonic prog rock (Kansas, Kerry Livgren, Neal Morse). These guys pull no punches – these well-crafted songs serve one purpose: to worship the Creator. Musically akin to Ajalon (Randy George actually contributes on quite a few tracks here), the implementation of a wide variety of instruments and styles augments the worship experience – without straying into self-indulgent jamming – creating an atmosphere where the music never usurps the message. [Prog Rock] Jonathan Swank



FORTODAY BREAKER

In the world of extreme music, where at times the vocals get so extreme they are indecipherable without a lyric sheet, this band is heavy yet still understandable. Lyrically the band is bold and unashamedly Christian, bouncing between songs of stand-up-and-fight, metal praise, and victory for the broken down. Tight, ultra heavy and low ended as expected – filled with chunky riff after riff and blazing little lead runs from start to finish. Not a drastic change from their last album, but this slab of heaviness continues to offer us brutal music with an important message for our generation. The track "Devastator" is one of the most powerful songs of battle I have heard in a long time and would be enough for me to want to buy this album again. [Facedown] Jeff McCormack



INNERWISH NO TURNING BACK

Listening to *No Turning Back* I was struck at how similar in style Innerwish is to Rob Rock. That's not saying this is a Rob Rock clone, not at all, you might not even hear it, but to these ears it's there, like a ghost in the machine. There are several good songs and memorable melodies, yet at times sometimes the songs feel a little indistinguishable, especially on one's first listen. Some mastering help to remove this biting midrange would help. This is a good power metal album, but I think it could've been great. [Ulterium] Keven Crothers



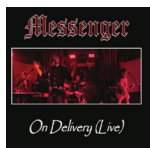
THE SHOWDOWN BLOOD IN THE GEARS

This new release plays like a combination of their last two releases. Back is a heavy influence of the southern metal thrash sound along the lines of Black Label Society, Down and Pantera. In a nutshell, this album is just stinkin' HEAVY! New members didn't make any radical changes in the sound, nor the fact that Josh Childers let the new guys do most of the writing. In comes Jeremiah Scott on bass, Patrick Judge (guitar) and "Yogi" Watts (drums) – both of Demon Hunter fame. The album as a whole takes what they have done in the past, steps it up a southern notch, wraps a rope around your legs, ties you to the back of a pick-up truck and drags you through the mud of the southern back road metal experience. [Solid State] Jeff McCormack

VISION

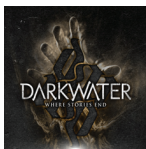
VISION/MOUNTAIN IN THE SKY

After 25 years, one of my favorite bands is on CD. For those of you not already familiar with their history, this band contained some amazing tickling of the keys by the then-former Lynyrd Skynyrd member Billy Powell. *Mountain in the Sky* has a much more classic 70's Southern Rock feel than the 1985 *Vision* release, and it also contains Leon Wilkeson on bass. As bonus tracks on the earlier release, there is a testimonial track from both Leon and Billy, which are more special since the passing of them in 2001 and 2009. Two releases of high energy, commercial hard rock, with a small dose of southern pizzazz. [Born Twice] Jeff McCormack



MESSENGER ON DELIVERY (LIVE)

I was struck by the excellent quality for this live album, since a lot of independent live releases sound like glorified bootleg recordings, but not here. Each instrument is heard with clarity and great separation. As expected the songs appear in extended rocking formats from the studio versions, and we get tracks not present on the studio release ("Fear No Evil," "Let My people Go," "The Risen Christ," "Rulemaker"), making it that much of a better package. If you enjoy Daniel Band, Barnabas, Rez, and the like – but with a good amount more heaviness – grab this, crank it, and sit back and let it melt your face off with that early 80's classic rock/metal feel. [Independent] Jeff McCormack



DARKWATER WHERE STORIES END

Darkwater's latest release is a triumph. A progressive cavalcade of melodies and musical exploration, *Where Stories End* – from the rich opening notes of "Breathe" to the epic feel of "Into the Cold" – soars with conviction and passion; it's a natural progression from Darkwater's debut. The majority of material is delivered with authority and command while not neglecting subtly or nuances that enure the material to the listener. Prog fans should unite and make this album a top seller for 2010. A big thumbs up from here. [Ulterium] Keven Crothers



MALCHUS DYDIMUS

You may recognize the title of the debut full-length from this Polish band. It's the alternate name of Thomas – the disciple who doubted Jesus until he saw the proof of the nail scars. Album art and lyrics consequently tackle subjects of doubt, faith, uncertainty, etc., set to a soundtrack of gothic-extreme metal incorporating elements of black, thrash and progressive metal. Imagine a cross between Illuminandi and In Grief – well-written and executed material with both English and Polish lyrics. [Soundmass] Loyd Harp



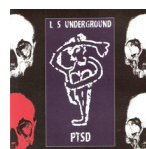
HOLY BLOOD SHINING SUN

The recording process for *Shining Sun* was highly unusual; the band that finished the album was entirely different – except for the lead singer – from the band that started the album. This change has lent to a more eclectic (if that was possible) recording with some hardcore leanings and increased use of female vocals, yet *Shining Sun* still reflects Holy Blood's distinct sound. Black folk metal, medieval metal, heavy earthly instrumentation – call it what you want, *Shining Sun* is very good and Holy Blood's best release since their classic album *Waves Are Dancing*. [Bombworks] Chris Beck



CORIOLIS THE ENDLESS FUNERAL

It's been 5 long years since this band's creative debut ... and 5 long years in the life of Jonathan Stamets, the singer and main songwriter for this innovative techno metal band. From the sound of things, his life has been painful and challenging, yet not without reward through the suffering. But even looking past the cynical nature of the lyrics – which by the way, are more of an honest catharsis rather than a contemptuous rant – the compositional maturity (compared to the debut) is noteworthy. The addition of a drummer and a guitarist really gives these tunes a much heavier vibe, but the cornerstone of the Coriolis sound remains Stamets' dark, vibrant and almost monotone voice. Diverse, upbeat, dramatic, doomy, introspective and passionate, *The Endless Funeral* is not only a trippy musical ride, it's a companion for those darker days of life when all hope seems (yet isn't) lost. One of the most engaging, moving and mesmerizing releases this year, I can't seem to get enough of this stuff. [Youngside] Jonathan Swank

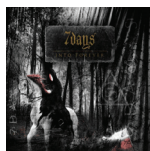


L.S. UNDERGROUND PTSD

The prolific Mike Knott's dark, wild-child alter ego LSU (or L.S. Underground) has resurfaced, much to the joy of *Heaven's Metal* readers. Knott has a beautiful gift of showing life and faith as they are – scars, skeletons, doubts and all – without trying to candy-coat or whitewash them for us. This continues to be true for *PTSD*, which speaks to soldiers coming back from war with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The picture painted looks like the emotional descent into madness in Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, as viewed through Alice Cooper's early garage rock period. Songs range from the mellow, despair-filled "Never Gonna Come Back" to the intensity of fuzzed out 70's guitar leads, legendary Jim Chaffin (Crucified) on drums, and Knott snarling, screaming, and pleading in "Child's Prayer" or "Lights Out." This one's a candle – not just for the soldiers, but for anyone who's had a long dark night of the soul. Beautiful. [Blonde Vinyl] Chris Gatto

ORPHANED LAND**THE NEVER ENDING WAY OF ORWARRIOR**

After literally "listening to this disc for months," I am still blown away. This Israeli band – who have previously released 3 other albums since 1993, and just recently opened up for Metallica when they played in Israel – have somehow managed to remain in obscurity on this side of the world. Certainly, this group of musicians is very talented – their brand of "eastern/oriental," melodic progressive death metal incorporates instruments and styles from cultures throughout the Middle East and beyond. The amount of diversity here is astonishing, yet their original sound is quite assuredly derived from metal. This, their latest concept work (translated "Warrior of Light"), centers on the story of spiritual "dark" and "light" – a theme which apparently appears in all of their work. From the entrancing – and surprisingly catchy – opening track, "Sapari," to the solemn epilogue, Orphaned Land takes the listener on a memorable musical journey replete with heavy riffs, death growls, acoustic musings, movie-type narrations, choral arrangements, soaring melodies, percussive lashings, well-crafted guitar leads/solos and just great storytelling. Six years in the making, the attention to detail is evident throughout, but never at the expense of songs that fail to move the spirit. Produced by none other than Porcupine Tree's Steve Wilson – who added his own touch of genius – it should not be surprising that the sonic clarity and sound quality are nothing short of perfection. And if the music isn't enough, the special edition comes in a digi-book – 28 pages filled with beautiful calligraphy, lyrics in Hebrew and English – with an informative "making of" DVD. Album of the year. [Century Media] Jonathan Swank

**7 DAYS****INTO FOREVER**

Back with an all-star line-up, Markus Sigfridsson (Darkwater, Harmony) has delivered another great collection of melodic prog metal with his second solo release. Thomas Vikstrom (Therion) – who also sang on the debut – is joined by Christian Liljegren (Audiovision) and Caroline Sigfridsson as guest vocalists. Fans of the first 7 Days release will be very pleased with the new material – both musically and lyrically – which is a bit more grandiose (especially the epic 19 minute "Final Wisdom"), yet Markus's signature guitar crunch still permeates the mix. [Liljegren] Jonathan Swank

**ORPHAN PROJECT****SPOONING OUT THE SEA**

This could be one of the greatest musical finds of the past year ... I'd never heard Orphan Project before, but based on what I'm hearing, this is simply fabulous progressive hard rock with smooth melodic overtones. Their bio lists Kansas, Yes, Dream Theater, U2 and Peter Gabriel as influences. The quality of musicianship, songwriting and the production flow together into a rich offering of musical excellence, these factors make *Spooning Out the Sea* a must buy for all fans of well-crafted music. [Neplusultra] Keven Crothers

MASS**FIGHTER**

Mass is one of those bands that have kicked around for years putting out some really outstanding melodic hard rock with a decidedly metal edge. What most fans don't realize is that they had actually recorded a full length album in 1982 for A&M Records that was never released! That is until now, courtesy of Retroactive Records and the band themselves, the first ever release of *Fighter*. Produced by Tom Allom of Judas Priest fame, this album has a bit more live feel to it. The fact that it doesn't feel 'perfect' only adds to the appeal for me, as many of the later 80's artists continued to shoot for 'perfect' here is a glimpse of what Mass undoubtedly sounded like in a live setting. Four of the songs ended up on Mass's 1985 album for RCA titled *New Birth*. The tracks of note are "Too Far Gone," "Voyager," "Do You Love Me" and "Watch Her Walk." I'm sure many fans will want to compare the differences between the two versions. All the Mass trademarks are here, from their razor sharp guitar tones, strong melodic choruses, vocal harmonies, and their penchant for writing stellar hooks. The production is probably the only thing that 'dates' this release, not with poor sounding tones, but with the 'large' reverb type sound. However, on the flip side, that does add to the live feel. "Bad Man's Reputation" is one of my favorite tracks here and it rocks! I can almost imagine the band playing right in front of me due to this album's sound. If you're a fan of the band's earlier work or Stryper, Liberty 'N Justice, you will want to get this album. Just imagine if, say, Stryper had recorded a complete album for a major label and it was vaulted for over 20 years, well that is what you have here. *Fighter* is a solid release that will leave fans old and new very pleased and wondering why this wasn't released sooner. [Retroactive] Keven Crothers

MY SILENT WAKE/THE DROWNING**BLACK LIGHTS AND SILENT ROADS**

Long-time fans of MSW (and Ian Arkley in general) will appreciate this very underground type split project with fellow UK doom metallers The Drowning. Each band covers the other on one track, MSW additionally covering Attrition with "I Am Eternity," certainly the heaviest song on the disc. The other tracks consist of original tracks by each band. Ambient, dark and doomy, these songs are perfect for a headphone vacation on the couch – on a rainy day – accompanied by a warm cup or your favorite whatever. [Bombworks] Jonathan Swank

**REINXEEED****MAJESTIC**

ReinXeed's new album is entitled *Majestic* and that title fits perfectly. Their previous material honestly didn't do much for me; it felt a little too indulgent. *Majestic* however, is epic symphonic metal at its finest. These are melodies that flow and soar like eagles, with the superb guitar playing to accent the compositions. Clearly with this, their third release, ReinXeed has stumbled upon or rather has crafted a sound that delivers the image they've created for themselves. It delivers on a grand scale musically; time will tell if *Majestic* will catch on in the metal community. [Liljegren] Keven Crothers

**AS THEY SLEEP****DYNASTY**

Pull out all the stops and breakdowns, and feel the power of this never-slow-down, brutal death metal concept album about the rise and fall of various kingdoms. Musically similar to their first release in 2008, the improved production cleans up and brings into focus much of what might have been hidden there. Full-on technical death metal, combining the typical deep-throated vocals mixed with the high screeches. While no new musical ground is broken, this is a top notch for this genre, and is sure to please fans of bands like BTA and The Famine, etc. [Solid State] Jeff McCormack

THROWING DOWN THE GAUNTLET

By Steve Rowe

THE LITTLE THINGS THAT MATTER

In a world where it is becoming increasingly discouraging to be involved in Christian Music Ministry it is always good to stop & reflect on what really matters. Like most in Christian Rock & Metal I am suffering the effects of p2p file sharing, bootlegging & other "Christians" just outright ripping me off. When we review the History of Christian Rock and Metal there are only a few willing to still stand up & say "Here I am send me."

I remember way back in the early 80's reading an article by Christian Music pioneer Barry McGuire. Barry stated that his most memorable concerts were the ones in the U.S., outside the major cities playing to small Church audiences. Barry commented about the privilege of playing to small crowds of 40 or 50 people. Not only were they very grateful that Barry had the time for them, but it also gave Barry a chance to really connect with people one on one. In the 70's Barry McGuire was a major artist in the developing Christian Music Culture and thus could have just chased the big shows & city churches. He did that, but always remembered to stay very humble and be faithful in the small things. Which seemed to Barry, more rewarding anyway.

Last weekend, Lincoln, Andrew & I in Wonrowe Vision had an opportunity to play at a Christian Youth Camp for 40 Elementary School kids aged 9 to 12 years. Plus 15 teen leaders and 10 Adult leaders. The kids at the camp were 90% from non-Christian families & disadvantaged homes. Most of them had never seen a rock band live. I remember being 11 years old & the thrill of a rock band playing at our school as just one of my greatest memories. But they were a band playing mainstream rock covers & not a Christian Ministry Band. The kids were so very receptive and wide-eyed in wonder as we played through our set. They all jumped around with Lincoln in the small room with beaming faces. It made me realize once again that being in God's will, at God's time makes all the difference. The value of presenting those young kids with the Gospel Of Jesus was priceless. Nothing can beat those opportunities to sow the truth about Jesus into young lives and to see their amazing gratitude that we were there to perform for them. Like sponges they soaked up every word of truth. With such experiences coming my way, I hope all those out to destroy this type of



ministry by killing it financially, wake up, repent of their thieving and help keep these little, but so very important opportunities alive!



GOLDEN RESURRECTION GLORY TO MY KING

Crafting a smooth neo-classical metal sound, Golden Resurrection is upon us.

With both Tommy Johansson (ReinXeed) and Christian Liljegren (Audiovision), Golden Resurrection has created a very good album of hook-filled melodic metal. *Glory to My King* is a nonstop collection of well thought out metal tunes. *Glory to My King* is full of catchy songs that really stick with you. The solid melodies and hooks are nonstop, starting with "See My Commands," "Glory to My King," "Proud to Wear the Cross" are just a few. Liljegren delivers well-executed vocals that any fan of Dio, Jeff Scott Soto or Rob Rock should just eat up. It must be pointed that Johansson's guitar work is truly the stitching that wraps this all together. Melodic and soulful with the technical precision that enhances each song and doesn't overpower it. His playing is tasteful and senses the proper place to cut loose, which is unusual

for a neo-classical player as they often try to jam every open spot with a 5-second solo fill. The other players on this album are not to be looked over as each plays at a top level – bass player Stefan Käck, drummer Rickard Gustafsson (Pantokrator) & keyboardist Olov Andersson (Audiovision & Grand Stand) respectively. The production breathes and allows the instruments to have proper definition. There will be cries for more bass response, which depending on one's ear, could be a reasonable request. A world class sound *Glory to My King* has. The lyrics are obvious in their intent and meaning. Any project with Liljegren involved I would expect no less and he again writes top drawer material that is uplifting and edifying without coming across preachy or corny. *Glory to My King* is a good album, perhaps even better than the Audiovision (*Focus*) album which preceded it earlier this year. Melodic Heavy Metal with a neo-classical flair is what you'll find here and you won't be disappointed. [Liljegren] Keven Crothers

ADIASTASIA

LIFE WAR (COLLECTOR'S EDITION)

Power metal for fans of Seventh Avenue, Eterna and even Stratovarius, there are some noticeable changes from the original mix on this re-release. Besides the vastly improved cover art, the best thing about *Life War* is the promise shown by the band members for future releases. [Bombworks] Chris Beck

ERIC CLAYTON

THE COLLECTIVE JOURNALS 1997-2009

This book is a fascinating read. Full of profanity, it's a funny, personal and very detailed collection of journals that flow together fairly well. Without proper punctuation or page numbers, it seems tedious to finish reading this large volume, but in the end is satisfying. I know that I came away with a profound respect for the man behind Saviour Machine and now feel informed on why *Legend's* last part has taken so long to be finished. [Paradox] Doug Van Pelt

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IT'S LATE, IT'S LATE, IT'S LATE, IT'S NOT TOO LATE

Didn't you just love the last issue (#86) of the fanzine? We sure did. In fact, that special 25th Anniversary edition of the fanzine, with its color double-wide cover and the expanded pages and the "Top 100 Christian Metal Albums of All Time" list ... it was so cool we decided to party hard and rest on our laurels for awhile. Okay, for a few months. It's almost Christmas as I write this little note and I wanted to greet you with a metal blessing and a reminder that you subscribers have not exactly missed an issue (as counting by the numbers will attest), but the two-month time period between the last one and this one was slightly longer than usual.

One of the exciting things to report is that our Karew member Keven Crothers has launched the Heaven's Metal Fanzine Podcast. Not only is it up and active (available for stream or download), but there's already four episodes out! This is a good sign that we'll be able to crank these out often. Please remember to support our advertisers, for they keep us in print ... and tell a friend or two to subscribe to this publication. If we can grow in quantity, I promise you the quality will get even better.

Doug Van Pelt



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